AKWEESI AND THE FALL OF NANANOM PƆW

John Brandford Crayner

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FORWARD

The author of this book, Mr. J.B. Crayner, is a trained teacher. Mr. Crayner is a man of many parts. In addition to his qualification as a teacher, he has also a flare for music. He has pursued a course of study in it at the School of Music in the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon and gained the requisite certificate. Music is a subject he still pursues.

The story of how he got involved in the field of research into the customs and history of the Fantes is briefly told in the Preface to this book. Himself connected with high ranking families on both the mother's and the father's sides, Mr. Crayner has exploited the situtation to a good advantage. It was this and other prerogatives which enabled him to enter places the access to which had not been easily given previously to other people.

This book in fact is the translation of his former book entitled "Akweesi Egu Nananom Pɔw", published in 1963. He has however not presented this present one as a literally translated version of the Fante one.

In his research, Mr. Crayner sometimes got the personal assistance of some dignitaries. The "Ghanaian Times" of April 9, 1963, (Page 3), carries a picture and describes how Mr. Crayner with Nana Kobina Nketsia IV, the then Director of the Institute of Art and Culture, visited the home of Akweesi, the hero of this story. Again, the "Evening News" of 9th September, 1963 (back page), also depicts another scene at Mankessim when Mr. I.N. Sijaona, Tanganyika, Minister of National Culture and Youth, with Mr. Crayner behind the scene, was shown the sacred grove of "Nananom Mpɔw".

This book, AKWEESI AND THE FALL OF NANANOM PƆW, cites documentary sources relevant to the story - a fact which lends support to its authenticity.

The research for facts about Nananom Pɔw naturally carried Mr. Crayner beyond the confines of the subject. It is hoped that the successful publication of the book will encourage him to give to the world of literature the rich information he now possesses about other facets of the Fante tradition.

A 'Crachi' Denteh,
Inst. of African Studies,
University of Ghana,
Legon.

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INTRODUCTION

The Institutes of African Studies of Legon and Art and Culture are repositories of hidden rich history which goes pari passu with our art and culture. There is nothing in this world which is devoid of history, unless we ourselves feel complacent or intentionally refuse to know what has once come to pass. Here, I should pay glowing tribute to authors for their unselfishness and good citizenship because they impart their knowledge of something they have acquired by dint of hard work to their fellow men. We must be very much beholden to anyone who has spent time and money to write a book; at times his or her very life reaches a point of uncommon danger in the course of his or her gleaning information to compile into a book. One such author to whom we owe a duty is Mr. John Brandford Crayner, of Enyanmaim in the Central Region of Ghana, who wrote this book - AKWEESI AND THE FALL OF NANANOM POW.

The book tells of the unprincipled activities of the priests in the fetish grove and how finally Akweesi, a Christian and a Fanti, brought about the fall of the grove and planted Christianity instead. The book tells of the good and bad acts of the priests. Some of their good acts were that the people gave offerings to Nananom through the priests who prayed to the gods to cure for instance, a nation-wide plague, hunger, and to strike off any ill omen they alleged to have foreseen. In times of drought, they appealed to Nananom to let rain fall. Individuals paid monies to be made rich and to make them fruitful to bear children. All these were fulfilled. However, where the gods had been enraged, and at a time when everything was in abundance and with the prevalence of much money, the inhabitants of the land were made by the priests who could not be challenged, to send some offerings to the gods before certain rituals were performed for rainfall to be restored by the Almighty.

It must not be forgotten that the numerous offerings, including all kinds of foodstuff, sheep, fowls, clothes, cows, cash and many others, all went to the 'white gods' and it is interesting to note that a certain respected chief once sent a sheep as an offering to Nananom but the sheep was later seen in the chamber of his own friend who was one of the priests at the Nananom Fetish Grove.

The Nananom Grove with its administrative and residential headquarters at Mankessim was looked on as the highest court of justice. When one was found guilty of an offence and could not pay the fine, one was brutally killed and burnt to ashes while others were forced to drown in a nearby river. But those who could

pay the fine went scot-free. The gods had no scale but used dug holes on rocks of Nananom to measure the gold dust used in paying fines. If one was able to fill a certain hole, the contents of which was allegedly equal to the amount charged, then one was free. If one was not able to fill it to the brim, he was executed. There were numerous atrocities meted out to the inhabitants by the unscrupulous fetish priests.

Christianity was in its ascendancy in the Fanteland. Methodism had long been established on the shores of Cape Coast but the strong belief of the Fantis in their Nananom Grove made that area quite impenetrable to Christianity. But since the Almighty is omnipotent, Akweesi, a devout Christian and a native of Asaafa in the vicinity of Saltpond, who had been exiled, sought to bring the downfall of the grove after he had been falsely proved by the gods of Nananom that he possessed witch-craft.

By the financial and moral support of the then Methodist Reverend Thomas Birch Freeman at Anomabo, Akweesi succeeded and more so by the adverse evidence given by one of the priests of the Nananom themselves, who was at logger-heads with his fellow priests over some disagreement on a reshuffle of the ranks of priests which brought him down. Forces of the Almighty made Akweesi and his followers destroy easily the famous grove. This thick grove was downed and only a savannah type of vegetation can be found in its place now. In place of the Nananom activities, Christianity germinated.

The authenticity of the facts of this book cannot be challenged because the author, by his marriage with his former wife, Miss Mary Akweesi, a daughter of Mr. Joseph Akweesi, alias Kwaa Otwe, a great grandson of the Great Akweesi, found it quite easy to get the information first hand from his own father-in-law and all those connected with the Akweesi family. Also, I have thoroughly checked these facts from the same source, but with difficulty because, it is very difficult for an outsider to get the facts concerning Akweesi.

J.E.K. Aggrey
Bureau of Ghana Language,
Accra.

PREFACE

The urge to write this book was provided by a strange circumstance. It all occured in 1952 when I was a Teacher and Catechist as well at Obidan village some four miles south east of Saltpond.

The Rev. F.C.F. Grant was the then Superintendent Minister in charge of the Saltpond and Anomabo Circuit. He was based in Saltpond.

At a quarterly meeting held in June 1952 at Saltpond, the Superintendent Minister intimated that he wanted the Church members of the Circuit to celebrate an anniversary in memory of Akweesi, a man by whose effort the 'Nananom Pɔw' the Sacred Grove of the Fantes was destroyed to allow the Church have a foot hold in the area.

Rev. Grant asked me to collect the necessary information about Akweesi and the part he played to bring about the destruction of the cult. He did this because Obidan is the final home of Akweesi.

I mentioned this exercise to my father-in-law, Opanyin Kwaa Otwe, whose Christian name is Joseph Akweesi. It happened that my father-in-law was the grandson and my wife, Mary Akweesi, the great grand-daughter of Akweesi, the hero of this story.

Having discussed this project with my father-in-law he readily agreed to help me. He told me about the sources from where I could obtain authentic details about the said Akweesi. He asked me to contact the then Methodist Church elder of Obidan, Nana Nsabaa whose Christian name was Joseph Quashie. Nsabaa is a descendent of Akweesi's wife, Andowa. He remains the very initiate source of my information. He told me that some years ago Rev. Anaman the then Superintendent Minister of the Methodist Churches of Cape Coast Circuit, went to the village to collect material about the said Akweesi and the fall of the Fante Cult, but he was given only the surface facts about the event because they regarded the details as one of the secrets of the family.

The late Rev. Gadiel R. Acquaah made some attempts in the same direction but his attempts suffered the same treatment as his predecessor.

I was very fortunate to share in the same secrets of the Ɔdomna family of Obidan because I had married into it. Having collected the necessary details about the life

of Akweesi and the events that led to the fall of 'Nananom Pɔw', I sent my material over to Rev. Grant. He asked me however to tell the story to the Church members when the anniversary celebration was held. The Anniversary was held in December 1952 and it was during the celebration that I told the story. A year later, a similar ceremony was held at Mankessim, where again I was made to tell the story.

It was after this telling that some people approached me and asked me to write down the story in a book. I agreed to do so and wrote it down in a booklet of about twenty pages. I believe it might be one of these booklets which the Bureau of Ghana Language got hold of, and recommended it to the Institute of Arts and Culture.

The Institute was then headed by Dr. Nana Kobina Nketsia IV. He got in touch with me and asked me to go together with him to Obidan and Mankessim the sources of the material and asked for further details of the event.

Having satisfied himself about the story as told in these two places, he said it was a very important piece of oral tradition, which would be of value to historical research. It was after this inspiring statement that I decided to write about the event in greater detail. I wish to express my deep gratitude to Rev. F.C.F. Grant, Dr. Nana Kobina Nketsia IV, J.A. Annobil, M.B. Walton and S.K. Otoo for the encouragement given me during my research and writing of this book and to Mr. Ime Ikiddeh of University of Ghana, English Department, for reading the entire manuscript and for numerous invaluable suggestions and criticisms.

I am most indebted to Prof. J.H. Kwabena Nketia, of the Institute of African Studies, and Dr. J.K. Fynn of History Dept., University of Ghana for their most constructive criticisms and comments.

I wish to record my gratitude to the late D.W. Acquaah of Ekumfi Eminsaano, an ex-Mfantsipim student, and a cousin to Rev. G.R. Acquaah, who by referring to his history notes and books helped me to get the dates connected to the incidents of this history. He was the first man to tell me this in 1948: "Danquah and his people who are fighting for self government should name this state after Gyana, after achieving it, because according to history our forefathers migrated from Gyana in North Africa near Sudan".

I am also grateful to my wife, Mercy Turkson, alias Nana Esi Kuma Bueduwa of Gomoa Tarkwa who encouraged me throughout the planning, drafting and writing of this book.

My acknowledgements are gratefully made to my field assistants, brothers Kwame Assan of Enyanmanmu and J.K. Essuman of Ekumfi Assaman, and to all those whose willingness to perform or give the information I needed has made it possible to write this and other publications on some of the Fante Cultural Heritage. Those who helped me most extensively are:

Mankessim	:	Nana Adoko II, Twafohene - Nana Oburmanko - Odapagyan - Oson; and Kobena Yedu of Edumadze.
Gomoa	:	Nana Kwa Ahunako XVIII, Gomoa Obaatan, Osofo Edufor a descendant of Ahor of Ahobaa festival. Ohenba Kwamen Edu of Budua Atta, and Efuwa Ponkuwa. Takyi-Annan of Potsen and Kweku Tsim of Oguan.
Agona	:	Nana Nyaako Eku IX of Nyarkrom. Adoo Sekyi of Swedru, Nana Edzi - Ekyir Kweku Sa - and Kodwo Kuma of Nseba.
Enyanmanmu	:	Ebusuapanyin Kwame Eduafo, Kwesi Crayner, Ama Esuon. Kofi Ahenfor of Enyan Abasa.
Edwumako	:	Ohenba Apea-Sam Kofi Esua. Nkuankuahen of Ampea Edwumako in 1963. Nana Yaw Kwesi Hameed-Osafori of Brakwa.
Breman Esikuma:		Nana Amuakwa Buadu VI and J.E. Yeboah, the State Secretary.
Abora	:	Nana Otu IX, Omanhen of Abora Traditional Area, Abakrampa.
Anomabo	:	Nana Amoonu VI.
Asebu	:	Nana Amanfi IV (1963). Odekuro of Moore (1963).

J.B. Crayner.
1979.

Nananom Pɔw

"According to tradition the Bɔrbɔr Fantes migrated from Tekyiman and settled in Mankessim under the leadership of three powerful chiefs, Oburmankoma, Ɔdapagyan, and Ɔson. On their death, they were buried in a grove which very soon became a sacred place to the people. The spirits of these chiefs were styled "Nananom " (great grandfathers), and the grove was therefore named "Nananom Pɔw" - the grove of the great grandfathers. The sacred grove styled Nananom Pɔw was a very thick forest with hard, tall and huge trees like Oak (Odum), Cedar (Tweneboa Kodua), Obekye, Sapale, Embir Kyekyireku, Mahogany (Okumankra), Silk Cotton tree (Onyaa), Okuw, Opurupuro, Wawa, Okumenyin, Odapan, Odawoma, Osese, Odanta, Tall Oil Palm trees, Bamboos and Date Palm-trees.

This dense forest afforded numerous woody climbers like Otwer, Ahamabosom, Ampaa, Mbow, Ahampo, Nfun, Nkegyaa and Ahamabir.

Some of them were of very great length, reaching up to the top branches of the highest forest trees. They twined and interwined on the way up curling round each other in great folds like enormous ropes. They formed a dense tangle in the spaces between the trees and filled up all the available spaces and spread their leaves as soon as they got to the light. The grove therefore became a very comfortable dwelling place for small and wild animals like rabbits, beavers, mangoose, foxes, bats, moles, huge hogs, guinea pigs, squirrels, rats, grass cutters, including fierce and huge ones like, wolves, bears, lions, rhinoceros, leopards, hyenas, reindeers, antelopes, apes, i.e. baboons, gorillas, chimpasees, orang-utans, gibbons and moneys like marmosets, rhesus monkeys and African black monkeys. Snails and several reptiles including rattlesnakes, vipers, pythons, cobras, mambas and tortoise were in the grove. Birds like eagles, owls, hawks, vultures, kites, parrots, ravens, crows and other small birds lived in the tree branches. The grove abounded in fruits like grapes, berries, pineapple, and local apples like adasema, afowa, adahampekyiwa and dates.

There were two wide and deep ponds; Atsendu pond at the eastern part of the grove and Nananom pond at the western side which were usually filled by Eminsa Okye river and Eguaso brook. Fishes were plentiful in the ponds. Nowadays the ponds are not very deep as they used to be.

The Fante Tribe is called "Bɔrbɔr Kunkumfi. Under this name we have three sections:.

1. The Bɔrbɔr Fantes

Ekumfi state, Nkusukum state, Anomabo state, Abora state, Abeadze state, Kwaamankessi state, Akatakyi and Amanfomba. Their first settlement was Mankessim.

2. The Gomoa People

Ɔpantsirmba, Aboramba, Andamba, Asanmba:- (Asanmba Edwumako and Efuwa-Edwumako); Asenmba and Oguankodwomba. Their first settlement was Mankessim, Bosabew and then to Gomoamanmu.

3. The Enyan People

Enyanmanmu state, Enyan-Abaasa state and Enyan-Denkyira state. Their first settlement was Mankessim from where they moved to Akotowagua and then to Enyanmanmu.

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THE BƆRBƆR FANTE IMMGRATION

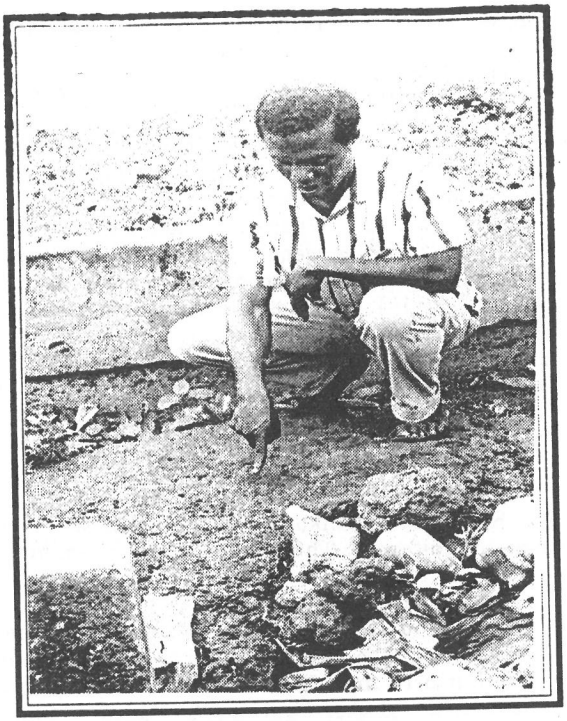
While the fourteenth century was in its teens, on one bright morning in March the Bɔrbɔr Fantes moved from Takyiman near the source of the Tano river, where they had made their home, to settle at Kwaaman. At Kwaaman, Ansafor the hunter, for the immigrants, went further south in search of a better settlement for his people. He found a very beautiful town Adowagyir with fertile land all around. This town was inhabited by the Etsis. When returning from hunting Ansafor shot an elephant and killed it. The Fantes went for the flesh and were attacked by a giant. The Etsis were people with bushy hair, and were described by the Fantes as 'Etsifuwifo'. They were the third group of the Akans to enter Ghana and the second to reach the coast. These were the people who were living in the area between River Pra and Adowagyir with the capital at Adowagyir. To the south was 'Abosambo', about three miles away from 'Adowagyir' and was also occupied by a group of the Guans, under the leadership of Ankoma. Some of the present towns of the Etsis in the Fante area are Etsi-Sunkwaa, Etsi-Fawomanye, Dutch Komenda, Etsi-Abor, Etsi-Abaka, Endoe, Abora Obuka, Kuruwa, Bosomadwe and Ekumfi Adowagyir. The Guans who were living at Abosamdo left for the present Ekumfi Ekurowfor, Ata-Kwaa, Gyina-Ankoma and Ɔteben-adze. Abosamdo is called Oguan after the former inhabitants. This Oguan is near Obidan in the Ekumfi state.

The year 1489 brought great trouble to the Bɔrbɔr people. For some time they had been incurring the displeasure of the people around them, especially the Etsi people who were occupying that area and the town of Adowagyir. Finding the area very pleasant for settlement the Bɔrbɔr Fantes determined to fight the Etsis and conquer their land.

The Kwaaman people or the Fantes were attacked by a giant, Akraman, with his troops of Etsi. Akraman and his troops gained an initial victory over the Fantes. The Fantes retired to their town Kwaaman, prepared and came against the giant, Akraman, again. This battle was fought three times and in each case the Fantes were defeated. One of the Kwaaman fetish priests known as Kɔmfo Eku decided to win victory for the Fantes. She therefore allowed her niece, Ama Teepuwa, to marry Akramann.

The wife detected that Akraman had a gown and a pot of medicine for bathing his bow and arrows. The poisoned arrows killed many people. The wife therefore in Akraman's absence took a knife and cleverly cut the bow about halfway and asked permission from the husband to go to her home town to see her family and return. On reaching home she disclosed Akraman's secret and told the Fantes to go into battle against the Etsis.

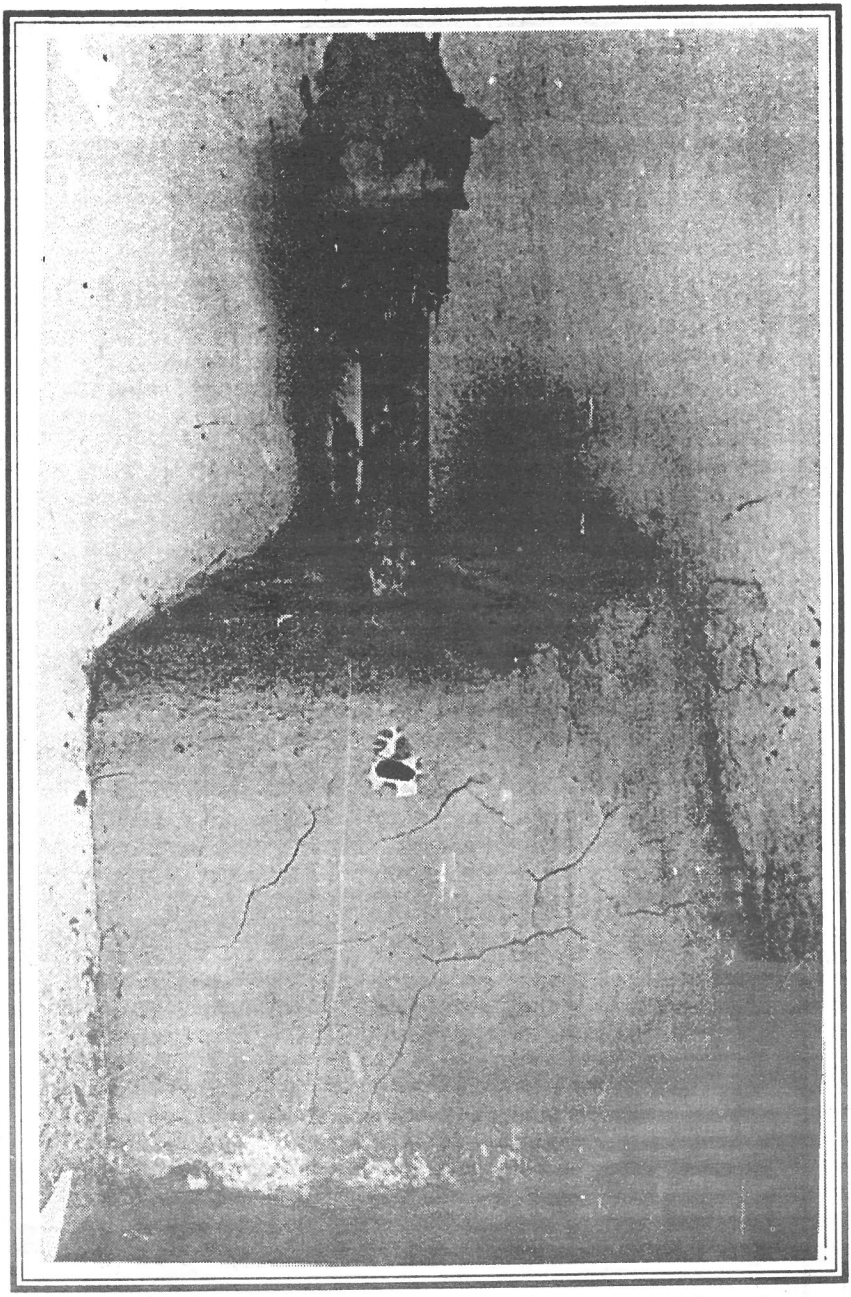
When Akraman found that the Fantes were overpowering the Etsis, he had a bath in the presence of his god of Adowogyir, (The god of Adowagyir can still be found at Mankessim between Twafo-brɔn and Edumadze.) put on his battle dress, recited war incantations and then marched in front with his bow and arrow to the battlefield. When he bent his bow to shoot an arrow, it broke into two pieces and the Fantes defeated him, the giant Akraman, and his people, the Etsis.



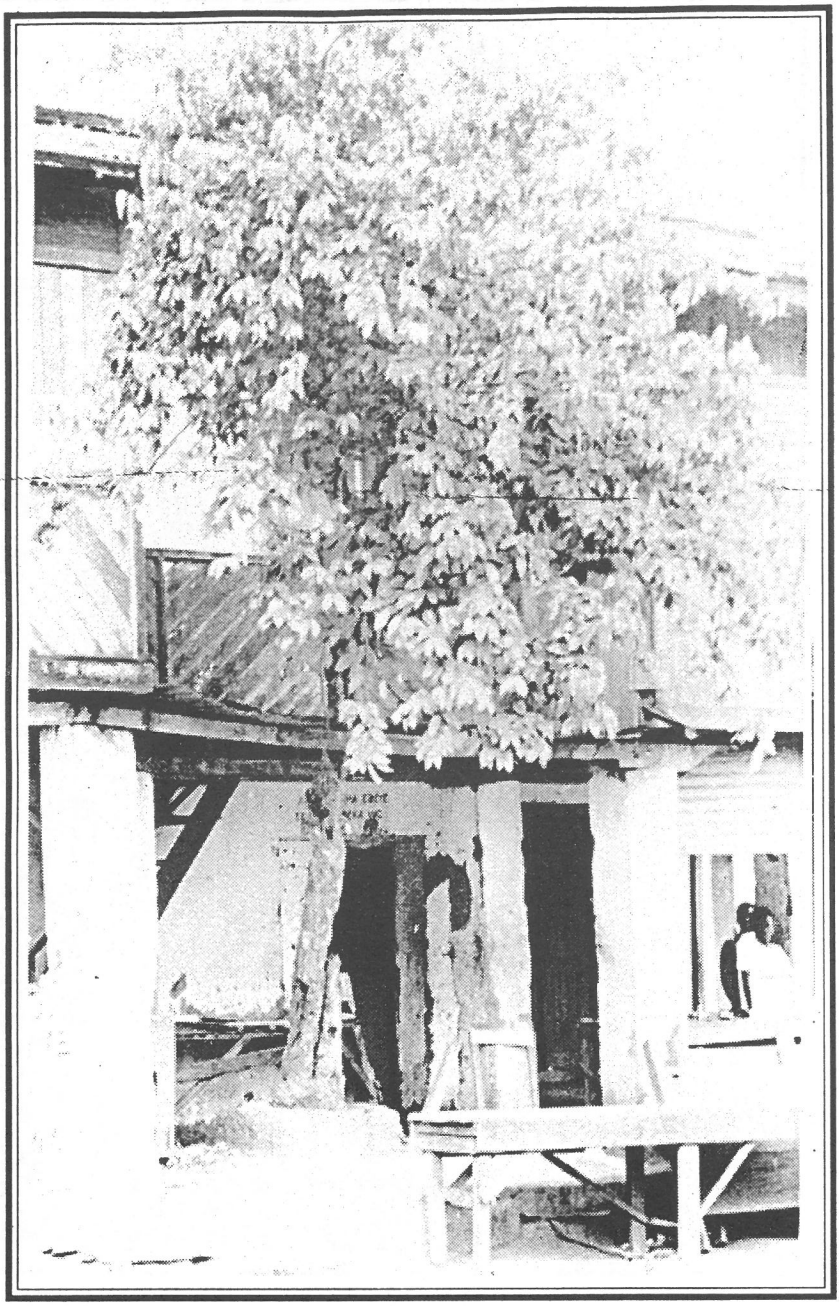
This is the god of Adowagyir - the place where the Giant Akraman took a bath.

The Fantes had looked forward eagerly to possessing the big town of the Etsis. Therefore when they had conquered it and were marching through the streets, Nyanfor Kurentir, the assistant leader, stood where Akraman took his bath and said: "We have come into the city 'Mankessim', of Akraman and his people." And from thence the city was called 'Mankessim' - the city.

Night came on and the Bɔrbɔr army moved towards the heart of the city where the leader planted a "Befi Dua" which was a cutting he had brought along with him all the way from Takyiman to be planted at their final settlement. The tree has survived till today and can be found at Mankessim Twafo-Brɔnmu. Near the "Befi Dua" the Bɔrbɔr people built a hut to house their gods - Bɔngaa, Ɔmanano and Bendereku. These gods are still at Mankessim.



The Bɔngaa



The Befi-Dua

The Bendereku

The Bɔrbɔr people destroyed the city of the Etsis and built a new one; for fear that the 'house-gods' 'Akor' of the Etsis might harm them.

During that time the Bɔrbɔr Fantes were headed by great leaders, like Ɔburmankoma, Ɔdapagyan and Ɔson; and their priests were Nyanfor Kurentsir, Amena and Kɔmfo Eku. Unexpectedly Oburmankoma and Ɔdapagyan expired, and they were buried in a 'Grove' near Mankessim. Ɔson was the only leader who was left to the Fantes, and he was assisted by Kurentsir.

THE ACCESSION OF EDUONU EGYIN

One day, Ɔson asked or ordered his Assistant, Kurentsir, to summon all the Fantes to 'Akyerem', their court for a talk. Kurentsir therefore beat the gong summoning all the Fantes to meet at Akyerem. They immediately came. The heads of the Seven Great Clans of the Fantes, Aboradze, Adwenadze, Anɔna, Ntwea, Kwɔna, Nsɔna, and Twidan, all attended the meeting.

During the Assembly, the great leader Ɔson informed the gathering: "It has now reached my time to die; and therefore I want a 'man' who will give himself up, so that his limbs will be cut off to make some medicine; and this medicine will be given to the man whose legs and arms have been cut off to drink and anoint himself. After this the Three Great Sword Bearers of Oburmankoma, Ɔdapagyan and myself will be presented to the particular man, who will look after the Fantes because all our
powers are ingrained in the great sword."

The Fantes the rose up and sang war songs:

1. Ogya e! Ogya e!
   Ee! Ogya e!
   Asafo Kyerɛmu e!
   Ogya Kwesi e!
   Ogya o!
   Fire! Fire!
   Fire!
   Asafo Kyerɛmu
   Fire Kwesi!
   Fire!

2. Kyerɛmu e! Oburmankoma e!
   Ee! Kyiremu e! Oburmankoma e!
   Oburmankoma Ɔdapagyan !
   Oburmankoma Ɔdapagyan !
   Ɔson ! Ɔson only rules supreme.

After the singing, Ɔson repeated his request, for a man who would give himself up for the sacrifice; but nobody came forward. Therefore they all dispersed in a sad mood.

After a week's time, he summoned them again and made the same demand and that also had no effect.

Eduonu, who was the head of Aboradze - Takyina clan went home in great melancholy. That evening as he ate his food he was talking, and his wife, Ɔbemba of Nsɔna clan, asked him why he was talking while eating.

Eduonu narrated to her all that Ɔson had put before them during the meeting: "Ɔson summoned us to Akyerem for a meeting, and during the meeting he put

before us a request that we should give up a 'man' whose arms and legs will be cut off to make some medicine - and that particular man would be the 'leader' for all the Fantes when he Oson had expired. But nobody was able to come out for this sacrifice. That's what I'm thinking over". "Oh! Eduonu, we have two sons, Befi and Egyin. And so you can give up Egyin, and Befi the elder may remain: for he is the first born who usually helps you in farming. I suppose in the near future we will profit from such a sacrifice."

Eduonu became very surprised. And therefore he hastily approached Kwame Kurentsir his Uncle-in-law who was the head of Nsona clan and told him what his niece had suggested. The Uncle-in-law then told him: "Well, nephew-in-law, of course I also have sons, and I personally cannot give any of my sons for the sacrifice, and if Obemba, your wife has agreed to give Egyin her own son, for the sacrifice, I have no objection".

Oson then called all the Heads again for the third time and urgently asked for the man. Now when Eduonu was attending the meeting he went with his son Egyin and gave him to Oson for his request.

Oson then called the boy and put him onto a platform, and told the boy: "I will cut off your arms and legs, won't you be afraid to die?" "Nana! I'm not afraid, and if I die at all, I die for all the Fantes" replied Egyin.

Oson then called four strong men to hold Egyin firmly on the platform for the amputation. Oson held up a sharp sword firmly. He was going to cut off the boy's arms and legs. But all he did was to cut both arms and legs slightly and only took out the 'blood' in a cotton wool and made a medicine, and gave it to the boy to drink and anoint his body.

Oson then took the boy home, and kept him in a room for seven days rituals. After the seven days, he was installed as the first Omanhene of the Borbor Fantes, and that day was a Wednesday.

In the evening of the next day, Oson expired. His body was conveyed to and buried in the "Grove" where his brothers were buried.

After his burial, the three priests, who were Nyanfor Kurentsir, Amena and Eku all of the Takyina clan, thought of how they would serve the spirits of the Great leaders so that the Fantes would be helped at any time when they called on them.

Eduonu-Egyin being the Paramounnt Chief (Omanhene) (1502 A.D.) also agreed to the suggestion and a gong was beaten, forbiddinng anyone to enter the 'Grove" for anything, even hunting. And from then the 'Grove' became a sacred place to the Fante people. The spirits of Oburmankoma, Odapagyan and Oson were called 'Nananom' - the great grandfathers, and the grove was called 'Nananom Pow' - the grove of the great grandfathers.

The Paramount Chiefs of Mankessim since 1500

1.	Eduonu-Egyin	1502
2.	Kweku Befi	1585
3.	Okofo Gyesi	1601
4.	Boa Amponsem	1740
5.	Adoko Panyin	1827
6.	Adoko Kuma	1831
7.	Nana Obosu	1844
8.	Kwesi Edu	1851
9.	Kweku Mbir	1860
10.	Edu Agyeman	1910
11.	Aborbora-Katakyi	1915
12.	Boako	1922
13.	Adoko II	1925 - 1968
14.	Adoko V	1969 - 1976

The grove was bordered by the villages, Kuntu, Abonku, Mankessim, Abaka, Asokwa Asaafu and Eminsano. The Fante states of Abora, Gomoa, Edwumako, Anyan, Nkusukum and Ekumfi took the most active part in the worship of Nananom. Nananon was accounted the greatest fetish of the Fante people for consultation. Resort to it was made at all times of tribal difficulty or peril, and this naturally resulted in the establishment of a powerful school of priests.

It was held as an oracle and able to give supernatural guidance to men stumbling in the darkness of imperfect knowledge. Nananom was expected to speak audibly when consulted. This the priests always provided, and "Talking god", became the national god.

Arthur Southon in his book "The Gold Coast Methodism, 1935" has these comments. "Had Nananom remained nothing more than an oracle to which men turned in their uncertainty of the future, one could think of it as only one more example of the universal craving for certain guidance, exploited by unscrupulous priests for their own interests. But there was a more sinister aspect at Nananom. Black magic was introduced into the worship, and in the darkness of moonless nights strange manifestations were reputed to occur. A vast spy system was introduced by the priests, through which a mass of information about all sorts of people was collected which might be useful to the priests when working the oracle. Thus when jealous men and women came seeking proof of their suspicions, the oracle spoke with such intimate details that the seekers without doubt believed had been obtained through the supernatural powers of Nananom". There were some people who offended the powerful priests. These were seized and taken to Okurududu Akwa a small pool and drowned. Others were conveyed to a hill side and burnt alive.

The seat of Nanannom which was the burial place of the three leaders, Ɔson, Oburmankoma and Ɔdapagyan. Here the author points to one of the numerous grooves used in measuring the gold dust.

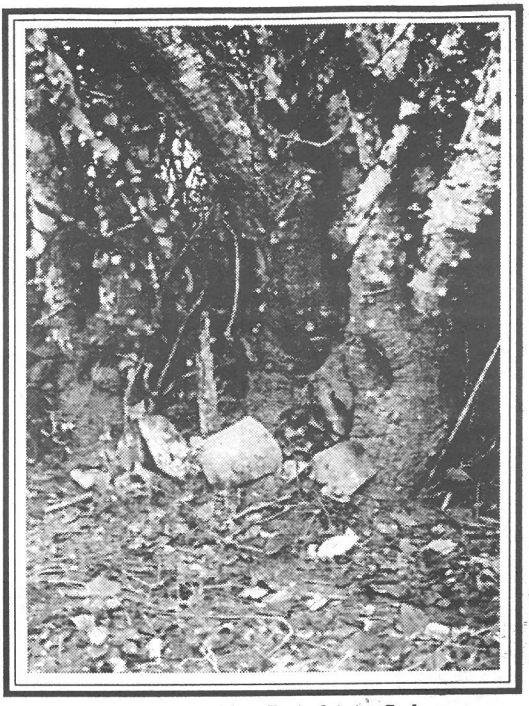
In the grove there is a large stone which became the landmark of the burial place of the three chiefs - Ɔson, Oburmankoma, and Ɔdapagyan, under whose leadership the Fantes migrated from Tekyiman and settled in Mankessim. The stone was the seat of the oracle. On the stone there are grooves by which the priests measured the gold dust which the guilty paid.

The guilty who were able to pay the fine were washed and bathed in a nearby pool known as "Atsindu". After one's needs had been fulfilled, he had to pay 'Osua' which would be £2:0 6d (¢5.00) today to the priests at the seat of Nananom. After this, he would be purified by being seated on stones in Atsindu pond and baptised by one of the priests. From Atsindu he would be led to the drinking saloon to bid the man who led him to the seat of Nananom farewell.

The pool still provides mud-fish. The guilty who could not pay the fine were burnt alive at a particular place south-east and about fifty yards away from the "Nananom Stone". Others with serious cases were dragged on their backs on the ground. These were tortured till they reached 'Akwa', a pool north-east, and about one mile away from the court of the Grove. They were drowned for the crocodiles to feed on. At 'Akwa' pool, the weeds that had grown on the surface of the water were the water lettuce, the white mangrove, and the wild date palm. The bush was so thick that the executioners could walk on the surface of the pool. They tried to remove a small portion of the thick bush so that the water underneath could be seen. Then the prisoner was pushed into the water under weeds to drown. Very soon after this cruel act, the priests would hear that large fishes were fighting for the flesh of the drowned man, each wishing to get the greater share.

The Nananom Pɔw is still situated about three miles to the south away from Mankessim the ancient seat of the Fante people. This tyranny of fear existed for years before the whitemen came.

Nananom had a drinking saloon where the priests sat over the drinks they received from the men who visited the Grove. It was under a candle wood tree known as ɔkanto in Akan. The saloon was a very popular place for the priests. It was by the side of the highway which linked the interior and the coast; from Mankessim to Asaafa. The tree has survived till today.



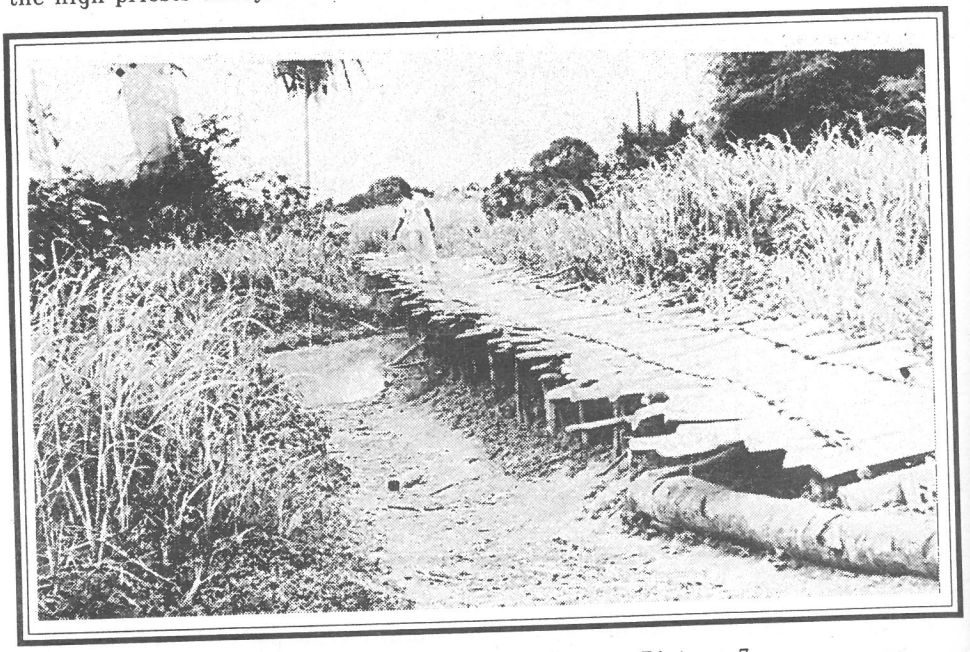
(Nsanomee) The Drinking Saloon.

The priests had dug a hole into which a big, locally made pot was put. They then covered the pit and a bottle was fixed at the top to allow liquids to flow into the big pot.

This saloon was always occupied by a team of priests. It was situated about forty yards away from the seat of Nananom to the north. Whenever a wine-seller passed by, the priests called him and said, "Nananom want to drink from your bottle". The seller might have thought that only a cupful of wine would do for them. But they would direct him to the buried bottle. Not knowing that under the bottle-head was a big pot, the wine seller would stoop over the bottle-head saying, "Taste my wine, Nananom, and guide me and my family". The man might pour and pour till the small bottle-head would drink all the wine he had bought from Mankessim. When the priests saw that the man's bottle was emptied, they would seize it and break it, because he could not give Nananom sufficient drink by filling their bottle. The man would continue his journey empty-handed and if unlucky would be flogged to death.

Individuals who passed by the grove alone were caught and killed. If a man crossed the road with a wife or a child accompanying and following him, he would suddenly hear the companion crying in the bush but no longer following . When he asked from the gods of Nananom, he would be told that the companion had been caught by Nananom's Kite and that he should not have his wife or child following him when travelling.

To consult the oracle, an appointment had to be made upon the payment of "knocking fee" to the priests. On the meeting day, one had to give a bottle of wine to the priests at the Nananom saloon for permission to see the high priests for consultation. From here the visitor would be led by a priest to the seat of Nananom where the high priests always sat to receive people with problems.



(Ɔdzɔɔ) The Artificial Bridge. Picture 7

The grove was a thick bush consisting of trees like silk cotton tree, candle wood, funtumia africana, odum and others. In the grove up in the woods, bridges were erected in the trees on which the priests walked and hid in the sacred place. When a man or animal was to be offered to the gods, the priests in the trees, and on the tray or bridge above the grove lowered ropes which were tied around the neck and used to pull the offering into the woods. No offender could discern the trick and to return to the report at Asaafa, Suprudu, and Obidan in the Ekumfi state.

The Nananom Blood Pot

There was a blood pot at the seat of Nananom. It was made of Odum wood, the known species used in carving family stools and was externally decorated with figures like stars, sun, full moon, new moon, a snake pulling an offender and a bird lifting on offender into the sky.

The blood pot was used to store human blood for a series of rituals. Priests of Nananom normally performed rituals as required by the then pressing situations including outbreak of epidemics, drought seasons and lean fishing season.

The acquisition of blood never posed a problem to the Nananom administrators. It

was their normal practice to punish offenders according to the gravity of their offence. But in the main the heaviest punishment was to condemn the prisoners to death. In times of the need for blood, such prisoners were slaughtered and the blood collected in the pot. To collect the blood the condemned prisoner was taken to "Akwa" pond. He was tied to a tree trunk with the legs tied to the tree branches high in the woods. His head was made to hang above the pot to make it easy for the blood to drop into the blood pot when the prisoner was being slaughtered. The dead body was then pushed into the pond to feed the crocodiles.

NANA KWESI OTU AND HIS SHEEP

Kwesi Otu, the Paramount Chief of Abora Traditional area had a sheep - a white one. Chief Otu named the sheep after "Nananom". The sheep could answer 'Baa, baa', when Kwesi Otu called it "Nananom". He reared the sheep with the intention of giving it to the god of 'Nananom' for long life.

The giving ceremony was held on the second Thursday night in June 1828. Otu heard his sheep bleating in the woods. But the cracking of the woods made him forget about it. Nana Otu had a friend in Mankessim known as Kweefi who was one of the priests. Otu and his son visited the friend one day. When they reached the threshold of Kweefi, Nana asked the boy to go in and inform him of his arrival.

The boy went into Kweefi's house and did what he was told. When he got into the compound he saw a white sheep which resembled his father's sheep, 'Nananom'. The boy returned to his father and made this known to him.

Otu and his son went into the compound but did not see the sheep. Nana's friend Kweefi welcomed his guests into a hall. The welcome ceremony was done, and some drink was provided.

Otu caught hold of the calabash, and looking forward into a chamber he saw his sheep which had been taken by Nananom. The chief poured a libation. In the libation, Nana called Nananom to bless them, hoping that when he called the name Nananom, the sheep would cry or bleat.

"Nananom, god of the great Fante tribe, be in our midst, bless us now; Nananom, come and drink", Otu was calling the sheep: 'Nananom, Nananom, come, Nananom'. On hearing 'Nananom, the sheep replied, "Baa baa", and came closer to Otu. Otu stroked the sheep gently while saying: "Nananom, Nananom, I and my state will never come to you again. From that time Nana Otu and his people in the Abora Traditional area stopped going to the grove for blessing. They had found out that nothing was done in the grove by the gods, but rather by men.

AKWEESI'S LIFE HISTORY

Akweesi was born in the year of our Lord 1780 and died in 1896. His father was called Kyia, and his mother was Asikan. He was of the great Fante tribe and an Odomna clansman, who lived at Asaafa, a town of the Ekumfi State, opposite the island of Suprudu which lies on the East-coast of Saltpond, and about five miles to the south of Mankessim. He was a conscientious worker who was always busy with his cutlass, clearing weeds around the gourd plants to allow air into the plot and picking up and killing the beetles and caterpillars which might temper with the leaves of the plants.

Akweesi's great attention to his farms made the plants bear larger fruits than the other farmers whose gourd farms were always swallowed up by weeds. The repeated yield made the others envious. They hated him because he was the farmer with the greatest gourd-yield. The author was lucky to have Akweesi's only surviving daughter, the last born child and a member of the Obidan Methodist Church in which he was the Teacher/Catechist as an informant. She was called Mary Akweesi, alias Adwoa Asekan. Adwoa told the author that her father Akweesi was also called "The Grand Oldman' by everyone. She said that her father was a big man, nearly 6 feet in height, fair coloured, clean-shaven, with bushy hair and piercing eyes. He was a commanding figure. Although he was already in his 70's when she knew him the old man was still strong and sound in mind and body. He never seemed to have fever or any of the ailments common to old age. Although he was ordained a Methodist Minister of Obidan, he never wore Minister's clothes, but rather the clothes of an ordinary Fanti gentleman. An amazing, unforgettable man, his very person commanded respect and reverence. He was however actually very humble, approachable and fatherly. Never once did she see him angry. He was affectionate to his family and the members of his clan, and kindly to both workers and friends. Every one called him "The Grand Old Man".

According to my informants, Nana Asikan, Akweesi's only surviving daughter and Joseph Quashie, alias Kwame Nsaba, the grand nephew-in-law who was then the Head leader of the Obidan Society of the Methodist Church, Akweesi was born and bred at Esiwahyia, a village in the Ekumfi traditional area. Thus Esiwahyia was Akweesi's traditional village home.

Akweesi lived at Esiwahyia as a hard working youngman who was always busy working on his gourd farms. Since gourds farming was an increasingly lucrative venture at that time, Akweesi became rich and happy. His acquisition of wealth made his townsmen and even some members of his clan to envy and dislike him.

Finding himself in a dangerous situation among his people, he moved from Esiwahyia to stay with his uncle Egyir at Nanaben in the same traditional area to continue his farming activities. The situation became even worse at Nanaben compared with that at Esiwahyia. His own uncle Egyir was among the people who conspired to ruin him.

When the situation became unbearable at Nanaben for Akweesi, he moved finally to stay with his other relatives at Asaafa to continue the gourds farming.

Akweesi's success made his townsmen think that it was a wicked attempt on part to get such a yield, and so complained that he got that yield through evil means. The people complained to the members of Akweesi's family and to the chief of Asaafa about his satanic life. The cause for this hatred was his good farming.

Never before had so many gourds passed up the valley of the swamp of Asaafa. There were hundreds of gourds with long necks which lowed as they rolled forward. Much of the floor of the swamp seemed to be covered with gourds, so that a man would find it hard to count them all. Dotted here and there among the vast gourds were women who wore long clothes after the fashion of the Akans and upon their heads were pads to carry Akweesi's gourds home.

Scores of men and women, boys and girls were gathered together in the big field close to the town. Most of them were idly watching those who with powerful strokes of their cutlasses were cutting the gourds from the plants. Harvest time in Asaafa was usually the gayest season of the year. Many hands made light of the toil, and songs or happy laughter filled the air. But on this day the work proceeded in silence, with never a song or a laughter from those who worked or those who watched, except Akweesi and his family. This was the cause of all the hatred.

Akweesi had the wealth of the fields and the fruit of the earth, and that made him prosperous in all things: money, clothing, pieces of land, servants, jewels; he became lord over his brethren and great among his people. Because of Akweesi's riches, people went to him for loans. They were given the loans but they failed to repay them to Akweesi, the money lender. This made him stop giving out loans.

In their envy and poverty the people turned against Akweesi shouting and shrieking at him to leave the town, because they thought he was a wizard who spiritually transferred others' possessions to his, and so they hated him more than they had done before.

Akweesi's wife was called Andowa, a Fante and of the Adwenadze clan. Andowa's town was Asokwa in the Ekumfi state.

It happened one day in November 1834 that Kwakoma, the daughter of Egyir, Akweesi's uncle, died at Nanaben; a town which lies between Ekumfi Eyisam and Narkwa. Akweesi attended the funeral. He stood at the door of his big compound, moodily watching the crowd which danced and sang in the narrow main street of Nanaben. Eight large drums and a score of small tomtoms led the singing, and the rolling beat of so many drums sounded all over the town. Akweesi had never seen so many people join in such a fetish-ceremony before.

The whole crowd broke up into groups, and Akweesi could see their swaying bodies and shuffling feet as they joined in the dance. These were his people and in that dancing crowd were the friends of a long life time, who carried the dead body of Kwakoma and threw it over Akweesi to prove that he had killed her, as he was a suspected wizard or devil in the family. Akweesi's feet did not itch to dance, nor did the song of the dancers stir his heart with any other feeling save that of bitter anger.

He was bound, stripped and brutally thrashed by his enemies with the aim of killing him. He cried when he saw what they were going to do to him; and begged them to spare him, and to let him return to his wife and children. But they would not listen, for their hearts were harder than stone.

When he was unconscious his body was thrown into the long grass to be devoured by the beasts and the ants. A feast was held to mark the day when Akweesi the Odomna-clan-troubler was beaten up.

But Abedu Kuma, Akweesi's nephew secretly sought and found the body of Akweesi in a lonely spot on the edge of the forest. As he stood beside him, Abedu Kuma noticed a slight movement. He fetched water from the well, bathed his wounds and with superhuman effort carried him to a deserted hut.

There he made a fire, collected some grass for a soft bed, and fastening the entrance with branches, went off to obtain food and drink. For weeks Abedu Kuma gently nursed Akweesi back to life and health, and led him safely to his wife and children at Asaafa. Abedu was not happy to hear that his uncle Akweesi was a wizard. For that reason, he took his uncle to the god of Akorodo in the Gomoa state for consultation. In the presence of the god, the priests informed them that Akweesi was the only water-yam (Fasew) in their yam store which meant that he was the wizard in the clan of Odomna.

Abedu Kuma still doubtful of his uncle's witchcraft determined to take him to the Great national god of Nananom for consultation. Akweesi and Abedu Kuma called on this god one Thursday night in December 1839 for consultation. To their great disappointment; Akweesi was proved a witch. He challenged this accusation and suddenly felt terrible blows raining upon him. That made both of them flee back to Asaafa. Early in the morning of the following day it became known by all in Asaafa that Akweesi had been proved a wizard at Nananom. He was seized, beaten up and kept in a room which was full of the smoke of some burning pepper. His house was burnt into ashes and his possessions shared among his people the enemies.

Andowa, Akweesi's wife, hurriedly escaped and fled for refuge to Asari Kofi's house in Eminsano near Asaafa. Andowa told Asari that Akweesi had been locked up. The beloved friend Kofi quickly ran to Asaafa. He broke the door of the room into which his friend had been locked. He took him to Eminsano for refuge. Akweesi's enemies demanded his return, but Asari refused, and was unmoved by all the volleys of foul abuse heaped upon him by the people of Asaafa.

Three days after Akweesi's arrival at Asari's house, the elder son of the host caught a serious illness and died. Not more than a day later, the youngest son also died. Asari's offspring were decreasing. The sorry tale was carried to the guest, and his face grew stern as he listened. Asari sent his children to a native doctor for treatment. As he visited them, his wife and her relatives moaned to him for their dead. Many of Asari's children could not speak; the mother held out her tiny children in shaking arms, their eyes big with misery. The other wives and the elder children glared at him widely, muttering as he passed, that he had brought death upon them; an old wizard of Asaafa, Akweesi had come there to kill them.

It was in vain that Kofi tried to encourage them with words of hope. They would not listen, or if they did, flung back curses.

Akweesi The Friend Of Wild Animals

On the third week of February1840, Akweesi found conditions far worse than anything he had seen in Asaafa. He was very sorry to hear what had happened to his beloved friend Asari and his family. Therefore he asked Kofi to find him a place in the bush for his settlement. Asari led his friend to the Odekurow (the chief) of Suprudu to ask for a piece of land. The Odekurow sold them a piece of land which was near the Fante Sacred god Nananom. That portion of land was called (Nsebɔ Buw Mu) the den of tigers, for men could not do any kind of work in that bush owing to those wild animals.

The first day of the march was almost a triumphant procession. This happened on the third Monday morning in March. Ignorant of what lay before them, or of the exact nature of the Den, Akweesi and the family felt for the first time that they were actually marching on to their promised land. The hatred of Asaafa was over; and the happiness filled them with high spirits to such an extent that the air quivered with songs of rejoicing which rose in the marching family. On the way to their new settlement a certain traveller from Mankessim asked Akweesi where they were going. "We are going to stay in the Nsebo Buw Mu - the Den", replied Akweesi. "Return, for the place is the breeding place of tigers and wolves. You are going to offer yourselves as meat to the animals", seconded the traveller. "Apa! it will be better to offer myself and family to the animals as meat than to give myself and family to my people to be tortured and massacred", replied Akweesi.

When they reached the place of their new settlement, Akweesi cleared the bush and built a barn of two storeys. They slept upstairs and kept their goods downstairs.

At night they could hear the animals crying, fighting and hopping around their house, but none dare come in to hurt them. In the morning, they could see footprints of wild animals like tigers and wolves and bears. In the day time, they used to see wolves fighting with weaker animals but none of the animals attempted to kill Akweesi and his people. The animals became like dogs watching them in the night and friends in the day time.

Akweesi's cottage was just about half a mile away from the Nananom-Pɔw to the south. He stayed there fishing in the Eminsa Okye river, and farming in the swamp around the Den. Akweesi could harvest fresh vegetables and other crops like corn in the swamp, while the other farmers in other towns were preparing their grounds for sowing. He became rich, even more prosperous than when he was a farmer at Asaafa.

The restoration of Akweesi's riches made his people at Asaafa come to him. Akweesi's nephews, Abedu Kuma and Abedu Panyin came and settled in the cottage. Nyannsa, the son-in-law came to Akweesi too. Egyir, Akweesi's Uncle of Nanahin also came.

Akweesi was sorely perplexed to see Egyir among his guests since he was the enemy who created poison-plots against his life at Asaafa and so caused his removal from his home town into the [illegible]ce of wild animals.

Akweesi therefore thought of naming his village:"A man is dependent," as his people, his enemies could not live without him. Even now the village bears the name "A man is dependent" and in Akan (Obi Dan Obi or Obidan). Egyir told Akweesi that the rest of the relatives would be coming to join his band as they could not live independently of him Akweesi. They had many talks together during those long interviews and Akweesi began to understand more clearly the motives behind the hatred which had shocked him. The first discovery he made was that Egyir had a really high regard for his riches and therefore planned to cause Akweesi's death so that he might take over his riches.

One morning, Egyir went to Akweesi and conversed with him for real reconciliation. Egyir led by Nyannsa put this speech before Akweesi: "Man is born alone, even twins and triplets, each comes out of the womb alone by himself. But once in the world, he must live in society with other people, each owing certain duties to others separately and collectively, and each entitled to certain rights and protection separately and collectively from the society or state. Each individual is therefore his brother's keeper. He is responsible in certain measures for his brother's safety and happiness, and at the same time responsible together with his brother for the safety and prosperity of the village or town".

Finally, Nyannsa prepared to accept a higher responsibility to live in harmony and concord with all his neighbours, to play his part and play it so well that he could ensure living in harmony and concord with all others; ensuring the safety of their persons and property so as to make the village 'Obidan' great and powerful to face any enemy that might come. Akweesi agreed and lived with them as brothers and sisters.

KWESIAR ATA AND HIS GOOD TIDINGS

One Monday morning, April 1845, Kweedwuwa, a grand-daughter of Akweesi was playing at the back of her home when she saw a tall man who carried a gun. She led the stranger to her grandfather. Akweesi heartily welcomed him and asked him about his mission.

Replying, the stranger told Akweesi that his name was Kwesiar Ata. His town was Obokor, a town in the Abora State near Mankessim. But he was staying with his parents at Cape Coast. His father was John Warden. And as a hunter he had come there in search of game.

Akweesi welcomed Kwesiar Ata and led him to the place where he could find some animals. Towards sunset, the hunter returned to Akweesi carrying an animal. He thanked Akweesi and left for Ankafor, a town on the coast between Kuntu and Nankesedo where he was stationed then.

The following morning the hunter came to settle at Obidan from Ankafor. He had become a Christian through John Hayfron's preaching, and now in Obidan, he proclaimed to Akweesi his second mission which was Christianity.

Akweesi and his people living in Obidan believed in God and received the Good Tidings brought to them by Kwesiar Ata, in April 1845.

Kwesiar Ata the hunter and the teacher, now in Obidan, conducted services in Akweesi's house using the metal part of a hoe as their bell. Some months after their conversion, John Warden, alias Kwesiar Ata invited Rev. T.B. Freeman, the old pioneer missionary, who was in-charge of the Wesley Church at Anomabo to Obidan to be introduced to the members of the new found Church at Obidan. At Obidan, John Warden told Rev. Freeman all about the story of Akweesi and his village, Obidan. The Rev. Thomas B. Freeman, conducted a Baptismal Service there which he described as the most extraordinary event he had ever witnessed.

Rev. Freeman became very interested in the society at Obidan so that he frequently visited the members to conduct Sunday Services with them.

The author asked Mary Akweesi, his informant, if she could describe Rev. Freeman as she saw him. Mary replied that her father frequently told his children that Freeman was born and raised in England by his English mother and his African father. His education and social background were that of any English child. In addition to his work in the Gold Coast where he arrived in 1837, he was also the first missionary to preach the gospel in Nigeria.

His first wife died of fever in the Gold Coast. So did his second wife. Both were Europeans. He then married a national called Adwowa Fenba, the daughter of Nana Borpo who was also known as King Aggrey III of Cape Coast, who bore him four sons and two daughters. Because he understood none of the native dialects it was an advantage to him in later years to have his eldest son Ernest Freeman as a pastor of the church of which he was Superintendent.

Mary Akweesi said she never tired hearing the old man tell about Rev. Freeman's early days in the Country. The only way of travel was to be carried in a hammock (ahomankaa). He fought against the terrible human sacrifices and slave trade in some parts of the Gold Coast as well as in Nigeria, believing that they prevented the spread of the gospel.

A botanist as well as a preacher, Freeman found time to establish a village at Cape Coast, and another at Domenase near Mankessim and the third near Accra, where he grew fruits and vegetables. The money he gained from selling them helped him in his work. A thrilling story she liked to hear her father tell was how Rev. Freeman entered Kumasi. King Kweku Dua feared him, Freeman, thinking he must be a powerful juju man. To keep the coloured missionary from coming, the king buried alive two men at the city gate. Freeman entered Kumasi anyway, and the king was so impressed by his work that he gave him permission to establish the church in the area.

Madam Asekan said the old man told them that the King of Kumasi later gave Freeman one of his sons and a nephew. Freeman sent them to England for training. On one of Freeman's return trips from England, he brought the Ashanti King a specially built Carriage, a gift to the King from Queen Victoria.

She also learned that Freeman won the respect of the King of Dahomey. As a mark of his friendship, the King gave Freeman some men and women slaves for his own personal use.

Freeman accepted them - but he took them to the Gold Coast and set them free. Freeman was tireless. His sermons lasting over one hour, were evangelical and impressive. His favourite theme was the second coming of Christ. Sometimes he would weep during his message, moving his audience to share tears with him.

The swamp near Obidan village was fertile and fish of many kinds were caught alive at any time. This made Kwesiar to stay at Obidan and to make it his second home. Some years later Kwesiar saw Kweedwuwa the grand daughter of Akweesi and he asked her hand in marriage. The parents and Akweesi willingly agreed, and shortly afterwards the marriage was performed amid great rejoicing. "Obidan" is near the Nananom Pɔw grove, about half a mile to the south.

AKWEESI'S ARREST

One day Kwesiar Ata, the hunter staying in Obidan, went into the bush for hunting. It was on a Thursday night in August 1851. In the woods he saw people going into the grove and heard them conversing about how they would treat those who would be coming for consultations. Some minutes later he saw some of them climbing the trees while others were taken to their places to work the fetish. At once he realised that the practices of wonders in the grove by the Nananom gods were done by men but not by the spirits.

The hunter returned home. He told Akweesi, Abedu Kuma, Abedu Panyin, Nyannsa and others about what he had seen and heard. Andowa, Akweesi's good wife, was present and heard what was said about Nananom.

A little later, when the hunter had calmed down a little and the comments had died down, the father of the village, Akweesi, warned the hunter never to play such a game by telling evil stories against Nananom. "Ai! Brother Kwesiar experience teaches fools. My departure from my home town Asaafa to this hiding place was caused by this Nananom. The priests will burn us to death if they come to know that we talk evil against their gods", said Akweesi.

"Kwesiar, I will go with you to the grove on the coming Thursday to find out the truth and the secret. If it is found true that the supernatural powers of Nananom are proved by rascally priests, it would mean the people are merely murderers and deserve heavy punishment", intervened Abedu Kuma. Abedu Panyin and Nyannsa promised to join. So the secret party numbered four.

The following Thursday, in the night, the determined party, headed by Kwesiar went into the grove. In the Nananom Pɔw, they saw some people hiding. Some of them were the people they knew at Asaafa. They were conversing about what they would be doing to the animals which would be brought to them. They did not see the hunter and his secret party. Some of the priests held burning bundles of palm fronds and native bells. Many more were rushing into the place where the great stone of Nananom lay. What the party saw and heard confirmed that the talking god and other curious practices in the 'Nananom Pɔw' were produced by men - the priests.

Akweesi and his people therefore made up their mind that they would never step in the grove for guidance from any source but God.

The Nananom priests did not know that Akweesi and his band had found their rascally doings.

Kwesiar was often away for days and hours on his hunting trips, so he was used to cooking and smoking the animals he killed before bringing them home. On one Tuesday in August 1851 he shot a deer, it did not die on the spot. The animal ran into the grove. The following day, Kwesiar asked Akweesi and Abedu Kuma to accompany him to the bush in search of the animal. They followed the animal's foot prints and the drops of blood from the wounds till the party found it dead in

the Nananom grove under an Oak tree near the seat of the gods. The hunter cut two sticks of odanta wood and tied the animal to it. Abedu and Ata carried the animal on their shoulders. When the search party were returning home, Akweesi, one of them, cut four esudur trees and carried them on his shoulders to repair his hut.

On their way home, they met a man who was going to Asaafa, "Ai! where did you go?" exclaimed the traveller. "We went to get our game, and cut these sticks to repair my hut", replied Akweesi. "You are in trouble", said the traveller. "You have killed one of Nananom's dogs and have taken four walking sticks of the spirits of the great grandfathers. The law does not allow anyone to enter the grove. "I will go and report the case to Chief Edu of Mankessim", continued the traveller. For the grove was in the care of the Chief of Mankessim, who was then the Paramount Chief of the Fante people.

"Akweesi and his people are cutting down the woods of the Nananom Grove, they are hunting animals in it too", reported the spy. Why have you allowed these people to spoil the sacred place in your reign? continued the spy. "Who is that Akweesi? Are you talking about the old Asaafa witch who has been smoked to death?" Edu asked. "He is not dead, he is living near the grove with a gang of outlaws hunting in the grove and fishing in the Nananom Pool. They are using the grove as their personal bush cutting fire wood and sticks from it any time they like", replied the reporter.

Edu was afraid to hear this because Nananom was the greatest Religion of the Fantes. Nananom Pow was respected by all the Fantes so Edu was afraid to hear that Akweesi and his people were spoiling it. He expected to get a query from the Chiefs of other States.

Edu of Mankessim collected his sub-chiefs and went to Obidan one Sunday in August 1851. The Christians at Obidan dared not step out of the town on Sundays. Edu and his party found them in Akweesi's hall singing their hymns and saying their prayers to God.

As soon as the party reached the house, they jumped on them catching them one by one like goats. Each Chief caught one Christian leaving Nyannsa alone. Nana himself jumped on to catch him. But alas! a terrible blow was given to Edu's chest by Nyannsa. And Nana found himself lying on the floor as he could not stand the blow.

"Slaughter Nyannsa unto my feet", exclaimed Edu. But Nyannsa was out of reach. He went and reported the case to Rev. T.B. Freeman at Anomabu.

Akweesi and his people, the Christians were bound in chains, flogged and dragged to Mankessim. The houses and crops of Akweesi and his men were burnt to ashes, and their goods confiscated.

Each of the Chiefs took one Christian whose hands and legs were in chains. Those prisoners were put on the floor of their jailer's bathrooms. They were used as bathroom seats.

Nyannsa's escape was told to the Asafo company (the native army) at Mankessim. The company arose and chased him to effect his arrest and to return him to Nananom for capital punishment.

Nyannsa escaped, running through the towns Anokyi, Nankɛsedo, Kɔrmantse. He took the beach road. He was tired when he reached Abandze, but he pressed on till he reached 'Adandɔ' an area between Egyaa and Anomabu. Nyannsa stopped there and rested for a time. His head was full of thoughts, for he did not know what had happened to his people.

He did not know that large numbers of people were chasing him to torture him on the road. The Asafo companies were rushing like a rushing stream over rocks. They were walking through a foot path holding their pieces of sticks and cutlasses intending to smash Nyannsa whenever he would be caught. Battalions joined in whenever they reached the other towns. They were singing Asafo war songs as they chased him calling the names of Nananom, Oburmankuma, Ɔdapagyan, and Ɔson.

When the battalions reached Kɔrmantse, a captain was sent to tell the people at Abandze, Egyaa and Anomabu about the incident. The messenger did not know Nyannsa personally for he saw a man sleeping on the grass at 'Adandɔ'.

"Nana Amoonu! Akweesi the old witch of Asaafa and his people living in a village near the Nananom Pɔw are cutting down the Grove, and they have been arrested and taken to Mankessim. But one of them, Nyannsa has fled into your town", reported the captain. "He has not come here, did you not see any one on the road? asked Chief Amoonu of Anomabu. "Well, I saw a man asleep at "Adandɔ" replied the captain. "Yes, that is the man, rush back to capture him", ordered Amoonu.

A gong was beaten and the seven Asafu companies in Anomabu got to their feet and met the eastern companies. The God of Akweesi awoke Nyannsa. He stood up and saw people rushing from the back and from the front, pointing and hooting at him as a game in the hand of hunters. "Save me O God" prayed Nyannsa as he looked up for help. And during his prayers he felt he had been pushed into the thorns around. He fell; after a moment he found himself standing in the Anomabu Castle - Fort William, where Freeman was staying. The Asafu companies met at the place where Nyannsa fell. They made a great search but could not get him. An hour later, they heard that Nyannsa had reported the case to Freeman in the castle. That made them stop the search.

The wives and children of the Christians fled to Anomabu castle for refuge.

Andowa, Akweesi's wife could not run because she had then had a baby just a day before the incident. A member of the Asafu companies saw her and pitying her said, "This Akweesi needs big punishment, his disobedience has caused this weak and feeble woman to walk under this scorching sun. Not knowing that she was one of the Christians, the man took the new boy from the mother and gave it to some one to carry. And he carried Andowa on his back. When they reached the outskirts of the town the man asked her to come down. She took her baby and ran into the castle. In the castle she found Nyannsa and the rest of the wives and children of the Christians in the castle safe.

Freeman reported the case to the police at Cape Coast. Next day, the story of the Christians' disobedience in entering and usage of the grave and their subsequent arrest spread like wild fire and created a real scandal. Nothing like that had ever happened before, so they found it hard to realise that it had actually taken place, although they all felt that the act of disobedience had been avenged by the action taken by Chief Edu.

NANA KWESI EDU'S ARREST AND THE FALL OF NANANOM

The Christians, Akweesi and his party had been taken into custody at Mankessim.

In the evening of the Christians arrival at Mankessim, Edu called Akweesi and his people into his palace and ordered them to be killed. The executioners asked Nana Edu to wait till the next morning, because killing in the night, they might hurt themselves. The chief agreed and ordered them to be taken to the cells (the bathrooms).

The next morning they were brought before the chief. "People who are known are slaughtered secretly in the night, so wait till the evening", said Chief Edu. In the evening the executioners protested; till the police reached Mankessim.

The police went to Edu's palace led by Nyannsa and Freeman, and ordered him to produce Akweesi and his party who had been arrested from Obidan.

It was as if a thunder bolt had dropped at Edu's feet - he could not have been more dumb founded: for he had obviously not heard a word of what the police had said to him. As soon as he had recovered a little from his surprise, he went from house to house of his sub-chiefs and collected the Christians - Akweesi and his people. Their bodies had then become white like drowned persons.

Akweesi, Abedu Kuma, Abedu Panyin, Egyir, Ahondze and Kwesiar Ata were handed over safely to the defence officers. They were brought to Anomabu to stay in Fort William with Freeman.

When they reached home at Anomabu, Akweesi told Freeman that Edu, the Chief of Mankessim led a great company of excited men, nearly all associated in the worship of Nananom, against the Christians at Obidan. They were brutally flogged, their houses burnt down, their personal goods confiscated and their farms destroyed.

Freeman took the matter up on their behalf as soon as the facts were reported to him, and the Government ordered Edu to release everyone he had kept under guard in connection with Nananom, and imposed a fine of £18 on him. The released men lived at Anomabu having lost everything in confessing Christ.

The priests now stirred the people up to further aggression, and a few days later a party of armed men attacked the house of a local preacher John Hayfron in Anomabu where most of the fugitives from Obidan were staying. Again they were most cruelly ill-used. As it happened, the rains were long delayed that year and drought was threatening the crops. This drought was declared by the priests to be due to the action of Nananom, angered at the defection of the Christians.

The Government was now compelled to take more vigorous action, and Edu was summoned to Cape Coast. He refused at first to come in, but later was prevailed upon by some friends in Cape Coast to disregard the advice of the priests in his own interest.

Who would give witness in favour of Akweesi to reveal that the work of the oracle was the priests themselves who spoke the words supposed to come from the mouth of the fetish?

A day was fixed for the trial of the case, but Akweesi had stomach trouble and the case had to be adjourned.

An elderly priest living at Mankessim named Komfu Kum, and who was always sent to collect juju from Northern Ghana, was that year asked to stop. He always made profits so he become annoyed with the rest of the priests. He therefore wanted to reveal their rascally practices.

Kum heard about Akweesi's revelation on the tenth August 1851. He went to Anomabu and promised Akweesi that he could give evidence in his favour in the trial. Akweesi asked him to see Freeman and tell him about what he knew. The priest told Freeman what he had said to Akweesi. Freeman wrote his name and asked him to attend the trial.

The trial proved to be sensational and for Edu profoundly disturbing. In evidence, it was found out that the sole offence of the Christians lay in the cutting of some poles and killing an animal from the Grove.

Akweesi staggered the eagerly listening crowd by revealing just how the oracle worked, declaring that it was the priest who spoke the words supposed to come from mouth of the fetish. He went on to say that, some of the priests were appointed spies who went into the other villages to collect information about all sorts of people which might be useful to them when working the oracle. Kɔmfo Kum, then stood up and made matters a hundred times worse for the priests.

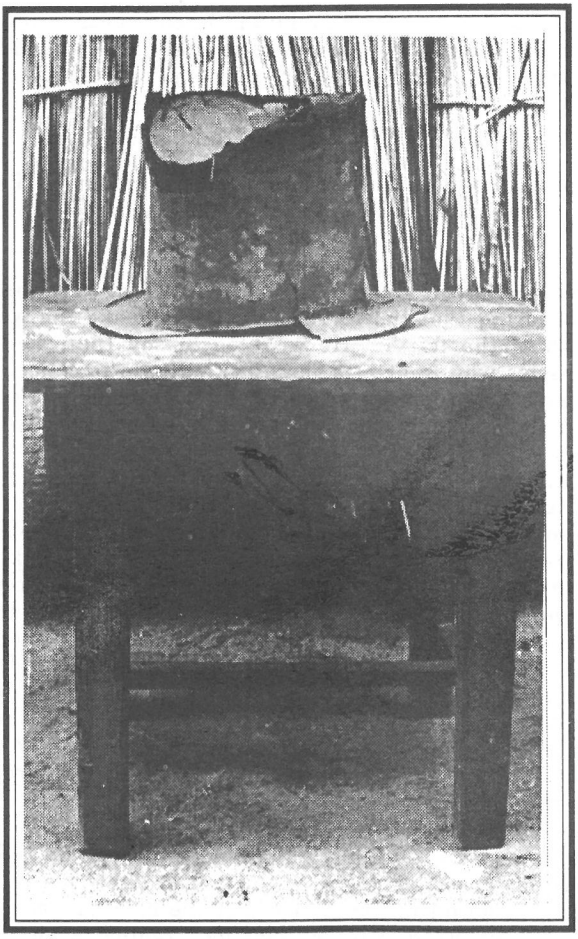
"Masters! everything supposed to be done by the fetish is done by the priests", declared Kum. "I repeat, that the words supposed to come from gods are spoken by men", said Kum. "Where are the articles - animals, wine, pieces of cloth and the gold dust brought to Nananom by the Fantes?" asked the judge. "Those articles were shared among the priests. I am one of them" replied Kum. "Nananom gives sunshine, rain, crops, children and prosperity. How do these happen?" asked the judge. "Seasons help us to tell; we proclaim when we hope another good season will come. Those among us who read stars helped us a lot. They could tell us about the storms, fish season, and others. Nothing is done by Nananom, but men", replied the priest. "When Nananom descends in the grove, the trees and leaves all shake violently. What caused them to shake?" asked the judge. We have tied the branches with ropes and the pulling of the ropes causes the trees to shake", replied Kum.

"Nananom knows all the secrets, the hidden stories can be revealed by Nananom, will you tell us about it?" required the judge. "Oh! Sirs, we have people who went out secretly to obtain information about the men who come to us for help. They could bring every word they are sent for", replied Kum. "Where are the people Nananom have taken?" asked the judge. "We have drowned some and others have been burnt alive", replied Komfu.

As Kum knew all the details, his evidence could not be contradicted, and in the end others in the fetish priest-hood admitted the truth of his revelation.

The result was that Chief Edu was bound over in the sum of £118 to keep the peace, and the priests concerned in the poison plot were publicly flogged, and sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

Akweesi was then ordained a Minister by Rev. Freeman on the third Sunday of September 1851. He was given a Hood, a Bible and a Hat. The hat is still in existence.



(Akweesi's Hat) The Hat Given To Akweesi By Reverend Freeman

The Government gave Akweesi a cutlass, and an axe to go and clear the sacred grove and every place where the practices were done. To safe guard the Christians, the following document or order was promulgated:

> "This is to certify that Akweesi of Obidan and his Fellow Christians suffered persecution from the worshippers of the fetish Nananom, and now have the full permission of the Government to return to their country and to the possession of their lands. All persons attempting to molest them are hereby given warning that these converts to Christianity are under the special protection of the Government.
>
> Magistrates and other officers of Her Majesty's Government Civil and Military, are requested to give full effect to this protection".
>
> (Signed) "B.G. CRUICKSHANK"
> "Acting, Judicial Assessor"
> September 12, 1851.
> Cape-Coast Castle.

This Document is still in the hands of Akweesi's descendant, Nana Eku of Obidan.

The Chiefs of Obidan since 1840

1.	Akweesi	1840 - 1896	6.	Amo	1958 - 1961
2.	Abedu Kuma	1896 - 1900	7.	Eku Annan	1961 - 1980
3.	Kwaw Obuw	1900 - 1910	8.	Esaa	1980 - 1990
4.	Onyam	1910 - 1944	9.	Okyir	1990
5.	Kwamena Kweenu	1944 - 1958			

Nana Edu The Christian

Nana Edu returned to Mankessim sorely perplexed. He had honestly believed in the oracle, and respected the priests as servants of the gods. Was it true that they had deceived him throughout? He did not know, but was determined to find out! To do this, he told the priests that later in the night he would come to consult the oracle about the future and placed some trusted men in secret within the grove.

At the appointed time, Edu appeared and made his request to Nananom. The reply came immediately - and with it a rush from the chief's concealed men, who seized the priests who had actually spoken the words supposed to come from the fetish. This happened on the third Thursday in October, 1851. Chief Edu's disillusion was now complete. The oracle was hopelessly discredited. The Priests were flogged and driven out of the town. He ordered them to pay his fine of £118.00 before they left the town. Edu gave orders for the majestic silk cotton tree under which stood the fetish to be cut down. As it was falling he cried aloud, "If you were a man I would make you refund all the gold dust and other things I have wasted upon you in other days!"

The Remains Of Nananom Blood Pot

In 1851 when Nananom practices were dismantled by Akweesi and Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, he Freeman, collected the blood pot from Nananom. He kept it in the Family house of his Ghanaian wife, Mary Freeman. Mary Freeman of Anona Clan was a descendant of Chief "Nana Kate, popularly known as "Nana Ketse" of "Keste Kokoaado", Cape Coast. In 1848 during Nzema Kweku Akaa's Siege, it was Nana Ketse who provided a burial ground to the Governor to bury Akaa when captured. The burial place was the old cemetery just near the present Catholic Mission Press, Cape Coast.

The cemetery was also very close to Mrs. Freeman's Family House. Her Family house was just below the North-Eastern part of 'STANDFAST', the Wesley Hill, Cape Coast.

The writer took the picture of the Nananom Blood Pot when he, Rev. J.E. Yarquah, the Cape Coast District Chairman of the Methodist Church, Ghana and Mr. J.E. Sey another Church elder visited Madam Mansah's house (Mrs. Freeman's Family house) where the blood pot had been kept up to today.

Currently the Blood Pot is in the custody of Mrs. Delaquis, the daughter of Madam Mansah.

The Remains of Nananom Blood Pot.

Nana Edu became a warm friend of the Mission (the Methodist Mission) and built a chapel at his own expense in Mankessim in November, 1851. On the Easter Sunday in 1852, Freeman took part in a Baptismal Service there. Two hundred and seven people knelt in rows before him, making public confession of their sins and seeking the sacrament of baptism, in penitence and faith. As Freeman was administering the sacrament of baptism, and as he was moving from one man to another, his sould thrilled at the thought that many of the men on whose heads he laid his hands were those who had so furiously attacked the Christians at Obidan. The Fantes therefore left the Nananom and served the Living God Almighty.

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